

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 232043Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8507

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 4320

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FOR LUERS AND SHLAUDEMAN

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR VE

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: A STATE 91364 B STATE 93044 C STATE 92686

1. FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR SALOM CALLED ME IN FOR A POST-VISIT CANCELLATION TETE-A-TETE. HE SAID THAT THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WAS PERFECTLY JUSTIFIED AND HAD NOT COME AS A SURPRISE TO HIM. HE BELIEVED THAT WE HAD BEEN TREATED RELATIVELY GENTLY BY THE VENEZUELAN PRESS AND ATTRIBUTED THIS TO DISTRACTIONS OFFERED BY THE PROBLEMS OF THIS "SCREWED UP WORLD". NEVERTHE LESS, HE SAID, WHILE THE POSTPONEMENT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE, HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE STATE OF US/VENEZUELAN RELATIONS WHICH HAD CLEARLY DETERIORATED. HE WANTED BADLY TO DO SOMETHING TO IMPROVE THOSE RELATIONS AND HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH LUERS AND EINAUDI CONCERNING POSSIBLE CHANNELS OF COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION. IT WAS HIS INTENTION WITHIN THE SPIRIT OF THE SECRETARY'S LETTER (REF A) TO ESTABLISH A SMALL FOREIGN POLICY UNIT TO STUDY US/VENEZUELAN PROBLEMS AND TO COME UP WITH CONCRETE ACTION PLANS. HE WOULD EXPECT THIS UNIT TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE EMBASSY. HIS PROBLEM, HE SAID, WAS ONE OF STAFF AND PERSONNEL DEFICIENCIES. HE WAS NOT RECEIVING THE SUPPORT WITHIN THE MINISTRY THAT SUCH AN ENTERPRISE REQUIRED. FURTHER, HE WAS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING

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THE PARTICIPATION WITHIN THE FOREIGN POLICY UNIT OF AD AND COPEI

REPRESENTATIVES.

2. I REPLIED THAT I WAS EXPECTING THE ARRIVAL OF INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE DEPT ON BILATERAL CONVERSATIONS AS A FOLLOWUP TO THE DISCUSSIONS MESSRS. LUERS AND EINAUDI HAD HAD WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WORK GROUP, CHAIRED BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL JOHN RAPHAEL. I SAID THAT IT HAD BEEN MY INTENTION TO BRING THESE TO RAPHAEL'S ATTENTION AS SOON AS THEY ARRIVED. THE FOREIGN MINISTER ASKED ME TO COME DIRECTLY TO HIM, AS HE WISHED TO HANDLE THIS PERSONALLY.

3. I TOOK THE OCCASION TO PRESENT HIM THE PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TRANSMITTED AT REF B. HE INDICATED THAT HE WAS MOST GRATIFIED AND THOUGHT IT A VERY POSITIVE LETTER.

4. THE FOREIGN MINISTER STATED THAT HE WOULD PROCEED TO WASHINGTON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THE SHAH'S VISIT, PROBABLY ON MAY 7 AND NO LATER THAN MAY 8. IT WAS HIS INTENTION TO STAY IN THE US FOR APPROXIMATELY 10 DAYS, FIVE OR SIX IN WASHINGTON AND THE REMAINDER IN NEW YORK. IN ADDITION TO THE WORK AT THE OASGA, HE WISHED TO SPEND AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE IN INTENSIVE BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE USG. FURTHER, HE HAD THE BASIC PROBLEM OF THE VENEZUELAN IMAGE IN THE US. HE WISHED TO MEET WITH SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN OF BOTH PARTIES. HE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY CONGRESSMAN DANTE B. FASCELL, SENATOR LAWTON M. CHILES, JR., SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY, SENATOR LLOYD M. BENTSEN, JR. AND WAS OPEN TO ANY SUGGESTIONS WE MIGHT HAVE. HE ALSO WISHED TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE WASHINGTON POST AND CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR BUREAU IN WASHINGTON, AS WELL AS THE NEW YORK TIMES, NEWSWEEK, TIME AND THE WALL STREET JOURNAL IN NEW YORK. HE ASKED FOR OUR ASSISTANCE IN MAKING THESE CONTACTS.

5. THE FOREIGN MINISTER STATED THAT HE WAS ANXIOUS TO SEE AMBASSADOR SHLAUDEMANN IN CARACAS. HE THOUGHT IT INADVISABLE TO WAIT ANY LONGER FOR HIS ARRIVAL SINCE ANY FURTHER DELAY WOULD CAUSE SPECULATION THAT SOMETHING UNFAVORABLE WAS HOLDING BACK THE ASSIGNMENT. HE THOUGHT THAT AN ARRIVAL ON MAY 2 OR 3 WOULD BE PERFECT. THE POSSIBILITY OF A

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DEMONSTRATION ON MAY DAY WOULD BE AVOIDED AND THIS WOULD GIVE HIM AN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE AN EXTENDED CHAT WITH THE AMBASSADOR ON THE MORNING OF MONDAY, MAY 5. HE PARTICULARLY WISHED TO DISCUSS SOME OASGA STRATEGY MATTERS. WHILE THE AMBASSADOR'S PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS WOULD BE HELD UP DURING THE SHAH'S VISIT, IT WOULD PERMIT HIM TO GET HIS FEET ON THE GROUND WITH A MINIMUM OF PUBLIC AND PRESS ATTENTION, SINCE HIS PRESENCE WOULD BE OVERSHADOWED BY THAT OF THE SHAH.

6. DURING OUR DISCUSSION OF THE OASGA I RAISED THE POINT OF HIS DECLARATIONS TO THE PRESS IN THE SENSE OF A VENEZUELAN PROPOSAL FOR THE LIFTING OF SANCTIONS BY A MAJORITY VOTE (REF C). THE FOREIGN MINISTER REPLIED THAT HIS REMARKS HAD BEEN TWISTED BY THE PRESS. AS IT STANDS NOW, VENEZUELA WILL NOT HAVE ANY PROPOSALS TO PRESENT TO THE OASGA. ALL HE HAD TOLD THE PRESS WAS THAT THE MINISTRY WAS STUDYING THE MATTER. HE ADDED THAT VENEZUELA'S POSITION AT THE OASGA WOULD BE COORDINATED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRIES OF OTHER HEMISPHERIC COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE U.S.

7. COMMENT: I BELIEVE THAT THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, AS REFLECTED BY FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR SALOM'S REMARKS, WAS BOTH POSITIVE AND HEALTHY. THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S PLANS GIVE US AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECOUP AS FAR AS VENEZUELA IS CONCERNED. I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT WE ASSIST THE FOREIGN MINISTER IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY WITH HIS U.S. VISIT AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE EXERT OURSELVES TO HELP ESCOVAR IN PROJECTING A FAVORABLE VENEZUELAN IMAGE. IF FEASIBLE, A CALL ON THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL IN DISPELLING ANY LINGERING DOUBTS AS TO U.S. NEGLECT OF VENEZUELA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, MINISTERIAL VISITS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975CARACA04320
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750142-1057
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750422/aaaaatwv.tel
Line Count: 139
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 A STATE 91364, 75 B STATE 93044, 75 C STATE 92686
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <23 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER
TAGS: PFOR, VE, US, (KISSINGER, HENRY A), (ESCOVAR SALOM, RAMON)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006